

Hunt Rhodas Series



Song John,



PETER G. THOMSON,
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LOS ANGELES

LONG JOHN.

On a small island, in the middle of a pretty little Lake, there once lived a poor widow woman, who had one son, a great tall boy, whose name was John. He was so very tall, and had such long legs, that all the neighbors, and, indeed, nearly every body else, called him Long John. Everybody, except the bad boys, who had been his play-fellows and schoolmates, they always called him by the nickname of "Hop-Sticks."

The tailor said he had to use twice as much cloth to make John a suit of clothes as was needed for any one else. And everybody teased him about his long



legs, though he, poor boy, couldn't help it, any more than can the grasshopper, which you have seen jumping about the fields in summer, or that other funny looking insect, which is sometimes called "Old Daddy-long-legs." We are-all just as God has seen fit to make us, and should no more be blamed or laughed at for our bad looks, than we should be proud or vain, if we think ourselves *good looking*.

One day Long John's mother was taken very sick, so she told him he must take the boat and row it across the lake to the village opposite the Island, where the doctor lived, and bring him over to see her.

So John took the boat, and was soon over, and, jumping out, ran up to the village to find the doctor. On his way up, he met two of the bad boys who lived in the town, going down to the lake shore. As soon as they saw the boat which John had brought over, they ran and jumped in, and, pushing it from the shore, began to row out into the lake, though they knew that John would soon be back, and would want his boat to take the

doctor in it, over to see his sick mother. But they didn't care for that ; all they cared for was to have their own fun, and a nice row out on the water.

Well, pretty soon Long John returned with the doctor, sweating and blowing, for it was a very hot summer's day, and the doctor had to walk pretty fast, as you may suppose, to keep up with John's long legs. But when they reached the place where John had left the boat, behold! there was no boat there, and, looking out upon the lake, they could just see it, far away off, and the two bad boys in it, who were frolicking and capering about, as bad boys will do.

When Long John saw them, he shook his fist at them, and called, and called to them, as loud as he could, to come back with the boat. But either they did not hear him, or they pretended not to, and kept on rowing out further and further. When the doctor told John that as there was no boat, and he couldn't get over to the Island to see his mother, he would go back to his home again. But Long John begged him to wait awhile,





as the boys would surely soon bring the boat back. So the doctor waited.

And now a small cloud appeared on the horizon and began to spread itself up over the sky. Another quarter of an hour had passed, and no sign of the bad boys yet, and at last the doctor's patience was exhausted. Just as he was starting to go back to his home, Long John thought of a way to get him across the lake, so that he might see and help his sick mother. So, without saying a word, and before the doctor knew it, he picked him up and set him across his shoulders, and started to wade across the lake. "Now," said he, "my long legs shall prove that they are good for something." The doctor quietly kept his seat on John's shoulder and spread open his umbrella to keep off the sun. John stepped out briskly, but cautiously, and, carefully picking out the shallow places, and avoiding the deep ones, he went merrily on, till pretty soon he reached the shore of the Island, where he put the doctor down, and soon they came to the house where his mother lay sick.

All this time the clouds grew thicker and blacker, and presently it began to thunder and lightning. Just as they got to the house, the rain poured down in torrents, and the wind blew furiously. In short, it was a terrible storm, which they had barely time enough to escape. The doctor carefully examined the sick woman, and having the necessary medicine with him, he gave her some, which soon relieved her, so that in a short time she was well again. Thanks to his skill and attention, and to the long legs of her son "Long John," who was thus able to bring the doctor over in time to cure her. But the two bad boys had been so engaged in their play that they did not notice the coming up of the storm, and only began to seek the shore when it was too late to reach it in safety. The storm caught them in all its fury, and as they knew nothing about how to manage a boat under such circumstances, it was soon upset in the middle of the lake, and those bad boys were both drowned.

From this little story we may learn two things:



First, to be contented with the bodies which God has given us. Long John's remarkable legs were, no doubt, a source of great annoyance to him, and he was often angry when the bad boys call him "Hop-Sticks!" but if he had possessed short legs, like other boys, he never could have got the doctor over to the Island in time to save his mother's life. And, *Second, not meddle with, or take that which does not belong to us.* If those bad boys had not taken Long John's boat, or if they had rowed it back to shore, when he called to them, they would have escaped the storm, and might even—who knows?—be living to this day.

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